

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2020

Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dr. Scott Rivkees
Florida Surgeon General
Florida Department of Health
4052 Bald Cypress Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis and Dr. Rivkees:

We write to you today regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019's (COVID-19) disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minority groups. Although health disparities existed before the coronavirus pandemic and will likely persist once we make it through this crisis, that should not preclude us from taking further action now to protect communities more susceptible to this disease.

This is especially prevalent given that national data has displayed a disturbing trend showing COVID-19's disproportionate impact on minority populations. Public health experts have warned that racial and ethnic minorities are at an increased risk of health complications if infected with COVID-19. Because of underlying health conditions prevalent in communities of color, including diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and other serious heart and respiratory illnesses, racial minorities are more likely to experience serious health outcomes when exposed to this virus.

In the state of Florida, at least five counties have reported that African Americans and Latino Americans have been hospitalized at higher rates than non-Hispanic white patients, however statewide disaggregated data is needed to ascertain the extent of COVID-19's impact on our respective communities. We need to take extra action now to protect the most vulnerable members of our community. And we must recognize and address the underlying challenges that prevent underserved communities from gaining coverage and accessing high-quality health care.

We urge you to begin regularly publishing readily accessible data to the Florida Department of Health's COVID-19 webpage, as well as the Florida Data and Surveillance Dashboard, disclosing racial and ethnic demographic breakdowns. This includes county-level data regarding the demographics of the amount of confirmed COVID-19 individuals, persons under investigation, and who has been tested.

This data is critical in informing our local healthcare workforce and will arm them with the knowledge needed to better respond to their specific communities. It will also provide local officials with the information needed to ensure equitable access to quality health care. Further, it will better inform Congressional representatives on the extent to which Congress must allocate further funding to address these disparities and close racial health gaps.

During this pandemic, it is more important than ever to ensure that health equity is at the forefront of our public health response.

Sincerely,



Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



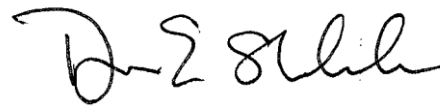
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



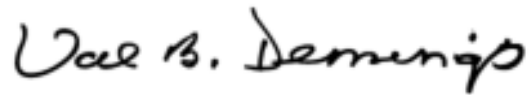
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Donna Shalala
Member of Congress



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Val Demings
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



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